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(Submission Deadline: 9 Jun 2000)

AIAA Short Course (Huntsville, AL, 21-22 Jul 2000) (Statement A)

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LESLIE. S. PERKINS, Ph.D Staff Scientist Propulsion Directorate

APPROVED/APPROVED AS AMENDED/DISAPPROVED

(Date)





## BEAMED ENERGY (LASER) PROPULSION (A Perspective)

by

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### Outline



- Preliminaries
- Historical Overview
- The Early Years 1970-1990
- · Concepts From The Early Years
- Project Outgrowth
- Paraboloid
- Absorption Chamber
- Heat Exchanger
- Developments In The 90's
- Doménstic
- · NASA
- · Air Force (Lightcraft)
- Foreign
- References



## What is Laser Propulsion?



- Laser Power Source (ground and/or space based) Propulsion System Using (typically) External
- Heats Propelland to Very High Temperatures
- **Provides Energy Source For Electrical Power** Generation
- Provides Direct Photon Force

"Laser propulsion is an idea that may produce a revolution in space technology."

JASON Laser Propulsion Study, Summer 77



### Background



### Why Laser Propulsion

- Decoupled Energy Source
- High Specific Impulse (Isp) Potential
- High Thrust Relative to Electric Concepts
- Avoids the Radiation and Mass Penalties Inherent With Nuclear Propulsion
- Technical Problems are not Fundamental
- Econonomic Justification Concluded in Separate Studies by AF, NASA, & DARPA

### **Mission Potential**

- Low Cost Access to Space
- Orbit Raising
- Kinetic Kill Vehicles (KKV)

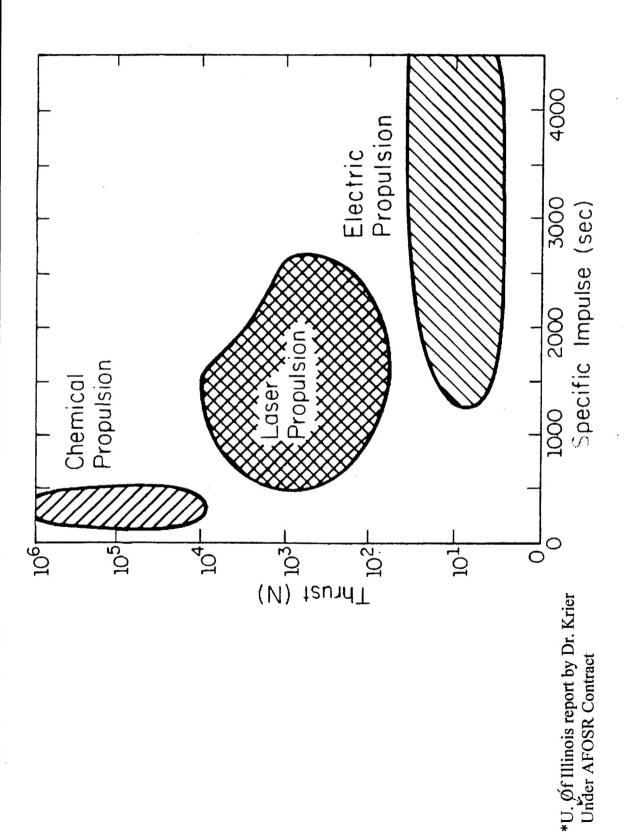
### Problems

- Lacks Complete Demonstration After 31 Years From Conception
- Reduced Funding for Demonstration
- Low Interest



### Performance Relationships\* Laser Propulsion







## Propulsion Relations



### Rocket:

$$F = Thrust$$

= Weight Flowrate

g = Gravitational Acceleration

out and the this Specific Impulse (s)

$$I_{sp} = F/$$
 $P = gFI_{...}$ 

E = Total Energy in a Laser Pulse (MJ/pulse)

t = Pulse Length or Width (s)

 $f = \text{Pulse Frequency}(s^{-1})$ 

 $\eta$  (CC or  $C_m$ ) = I/E

 $F=\eta(E/t)=I/t$ 

Thrust per Pulse (N)

Average Integrated Thrust

 $F_{av} = f(Ft) = f(\eta E) = fI$   $F_{lbs} = F_N/4.45$ 

Conversion to Pounds, Thrust



### **Brief History**



### Beamed Energy Rockets

- Microwaves - Willinski (1959)

· Lasers – Light Sails – Forward (1962)

- Rockets - Geisler (1969), Kantrowitz (1972)

### **Propulsion Activities**

1972 - Inhouse (Project Outgrowth Report) & Contracted Efforts - TRW, AFRPL

1972 - NASA Lewis Inhouse & Contracted Efforts - PSI, Lockheed, Rocketdyne-> NASA

1977 – NASA Marshall Inhouse & Contracted Efforts – PSI, U.S. Army Lockheed, BDM, UTSI, UAH

1977 - JPL - System Studies - Lockheed, Boeing

-> Micom,-

1977 – AVCO Everett Study

DARPA

**AFOSR** 

1983 – Contracted Efforts – Penn State, PSI, UTSI, U'Illinois

1986 - LLNL Inhouse & Contracted Efforts - AVCO, Spectra Technologies, SDIO

NRL, PSI, RPI



# Major Laser Propulsion Funding Agencies and Contractors The Early Years: 1972-1990

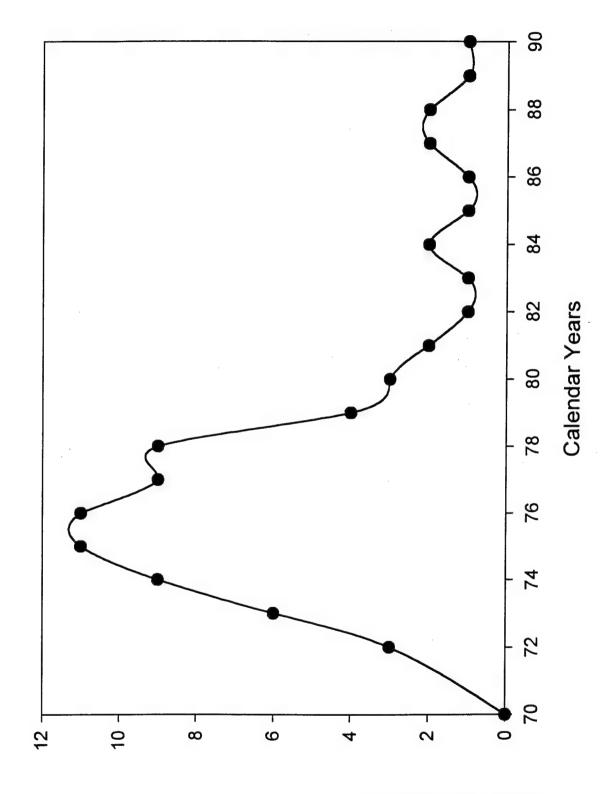


| Aberdeen Proving Ground<br>Harry Diamond Lab.<br>Battelle Lab. |                           |                                  |                                |           |            |          | 73/75        |                             |                           | 74 75 |       |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| Redstone Arsenal   |                           |                                  |                                |           |            |          |              |                             |                           | 11    |       |
| Tdf  |                           |                                  |                                |           |            | 84       |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| Ниghes Research Lab  |                           |                                  |                                |           |            | 75       |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| Photonic Associates  |                           |                                  |                                |           | 74/75      |          |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| sionilII to .U   |                           | 84//88                           |                                |           |            |          |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| United Technology Research Ctr.                                | <i>6L/LL</i>              | ∞                                |                                |           |            |          | 73/74        |                             |                           |       |       |
| Tennessee Space Institute                                      | 7                         | 85/91                            |                                |           |            |          |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| SRI International  |                           | ∞                                |                                |           |            |          | LL/9L        |                             |                           |       |       |
| Lawrence Livermore Natl. Lab.                                  |                           |                                  |                                |           |            |          |              | 74                          | 75                        |       | 87/90 |
| Rocketdyne   |                           |                                  |                                |           | 75/77      |          |              |                             |                           |       | ~     |
| WAT  | 75/76                     |                                  |                                |           |            |          |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| Lockheed Missiles & Space Co.                                  | 7                         |                                  |                                | 78        | 8L/9L      |          |              |                             |                           |       |       |
| Lincoln Lab.   |                           |                                  |                                |           | (-         |          | 9/           |                             |                           |       |       |
| Mathematical Sciences NW Inc.                                  |                           |                                  |                                |           | 79         |          | 75           |                             |                           |       |       |
| AVCO Everett Research Lab. Inc.                                |                           |                                  | 73                             |           | 92         |          | 4/78         |                             |                           |       |       |
| Physical Sciences Inc.   | 80/81                     | 83/84                            |                                | 78/80     | 74/77      |          | 76/82 74/78  |                             |                           |       |       |
|  | 8                         | ∞                                |                                | 7         | 7          |          | 76           |                             |                           |       |       |
| Contractors  | AF Rocket Propulsion Lab. | AF Office of Scientific Research | SAMSO (Los Angeles AF Station) | NASA/MSFC | NASA/LEWIS | NASA/JPL | DARPA (ARPA) | US Atomic Energy Commission | US Energy Research & Dev. | Army  | SDIO  |



### Laser Propulsion Interest During the Early Years



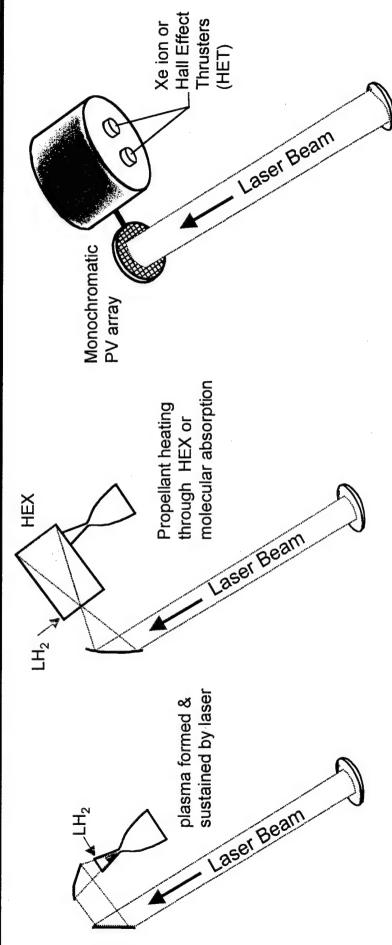


Funded Programs



# Laser Propulsion Concepts\*





(ls = 700 to 1100 sec.)Laser Thermal (ls = 1000 to 1500 sec)Laser Plasma

Laser Electric
(Is = 1200 to 4000 sec. at low thrust)

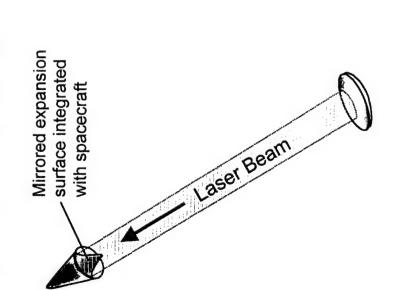
\*Taken from Mr. Jim Shoji, Rocketdyne, Boeing Co.

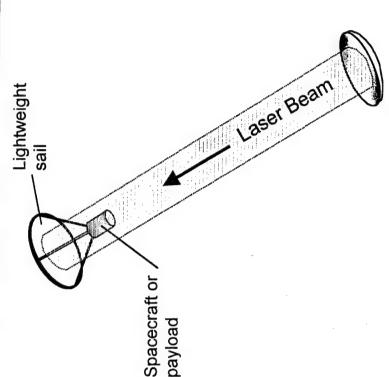


## Laser Propulsion Concepts\*









Laser Detonation (Isp: Essentially infinity in air)

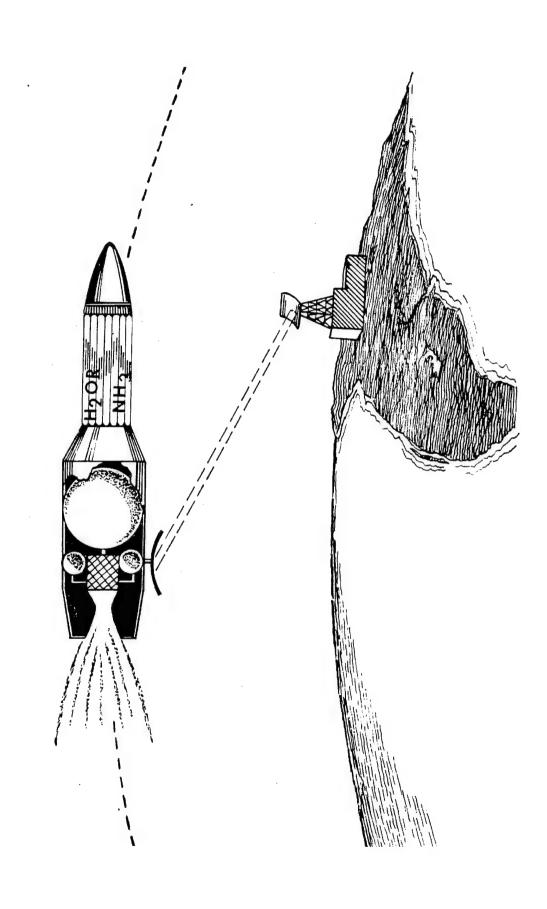
Laser Sail (Isp: Essentially infinity)

\*Taken from Mr. Jim Shoji, Rocketdyne, Boeing Co.



### Laser Propulsion (Project Outgrowth) (Circa 1970)

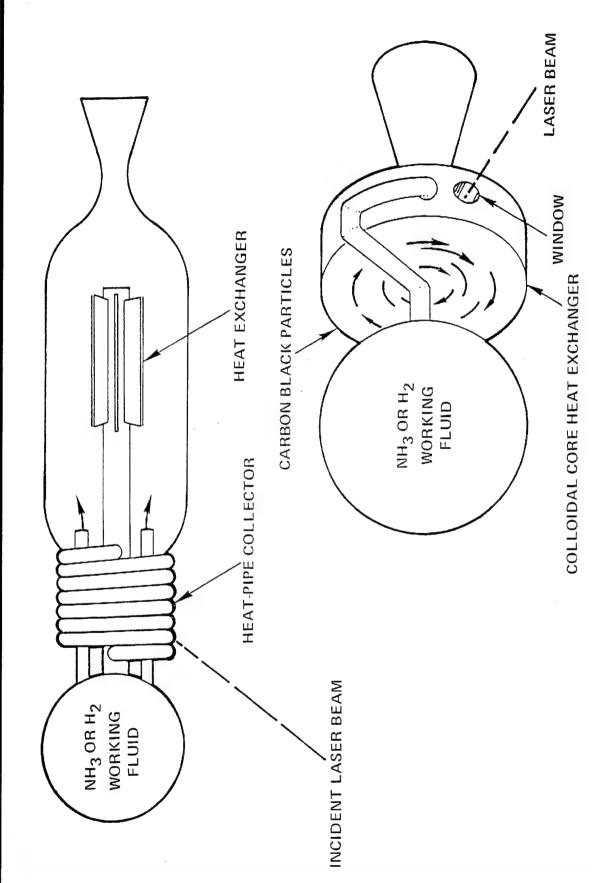






### Laser Propulsion (Project Outgrowth) (Circa 1970)

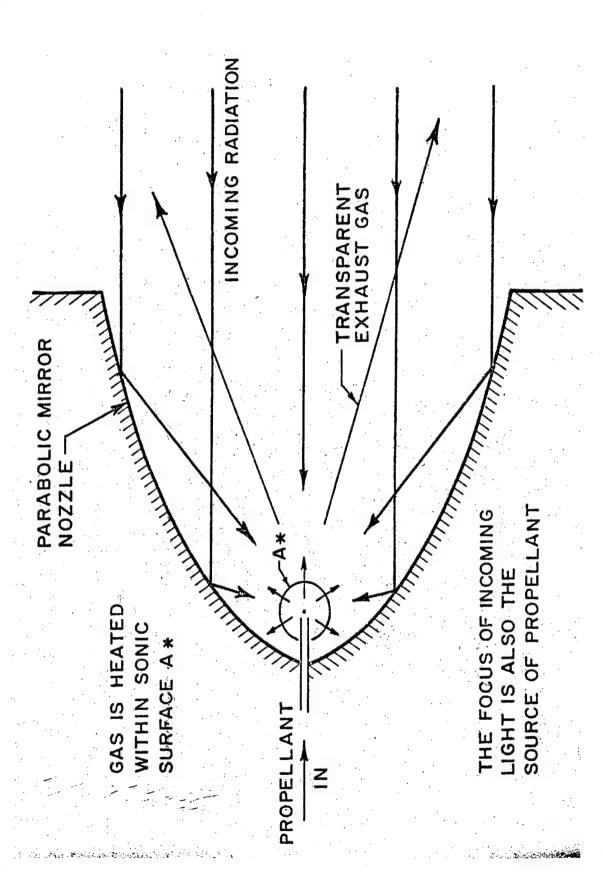






### **AVCO Liquid Propellant Rocket** Using CW Laser (Circa 1973)

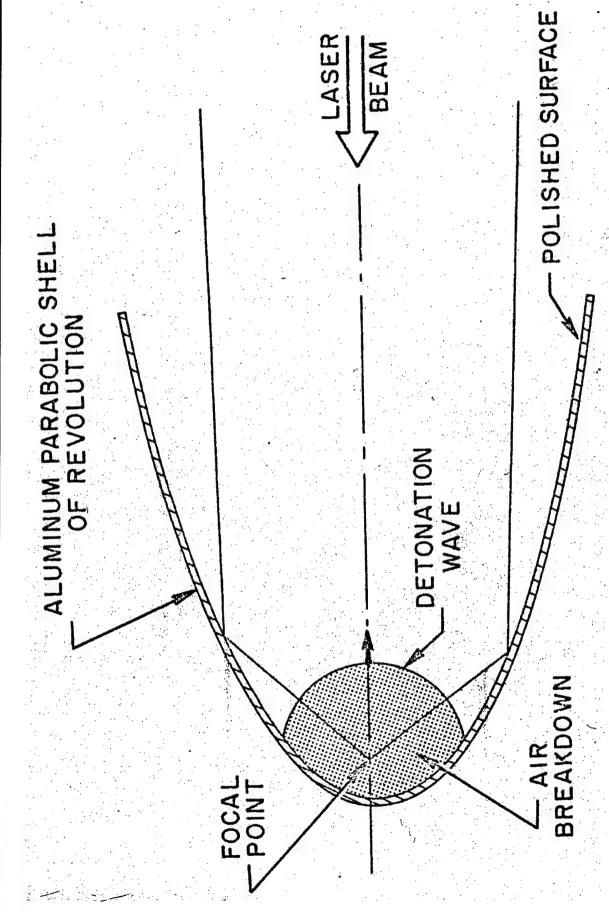






### AVCO Laser Pulsejet (Circa 1973)

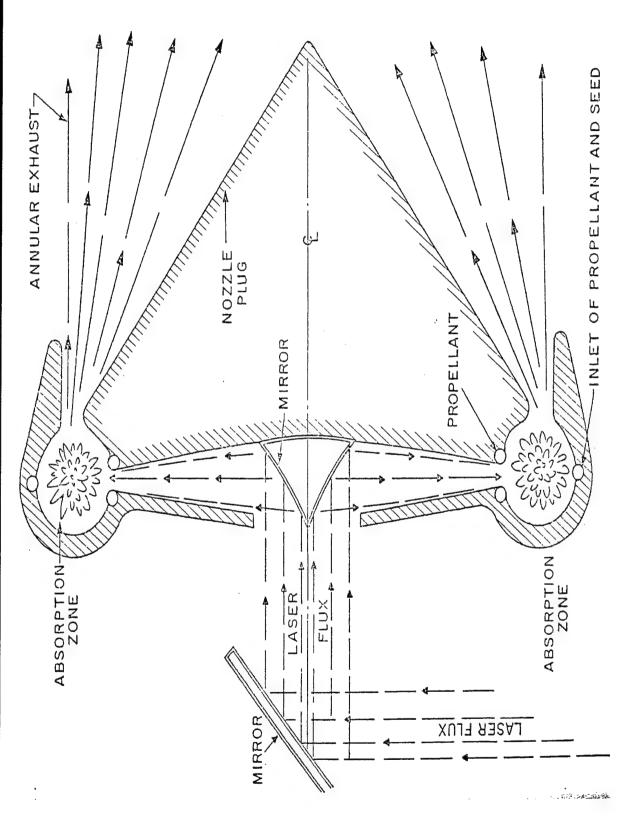






### Toroidal Combustion Chamber, Plug Nozzle **AVCO Advanced Laser Rocket** (Circa 1973)



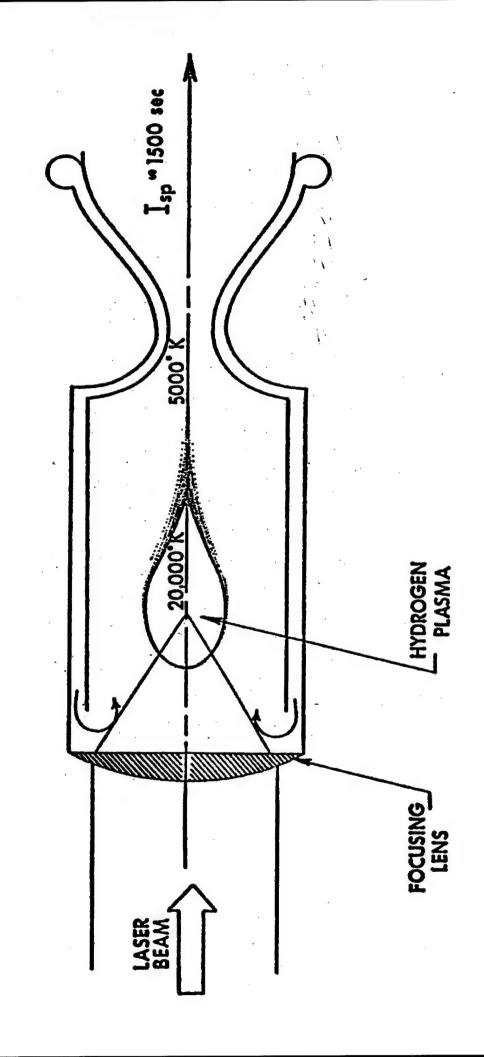




# "Keefer" Laser Absorption Chamber





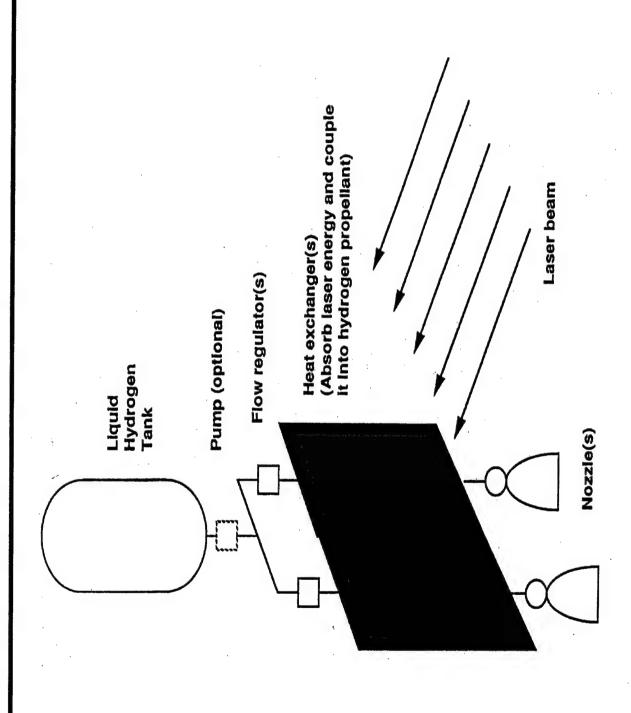




# "Kare" Heat Exchanger Concept

(Circa 1992)

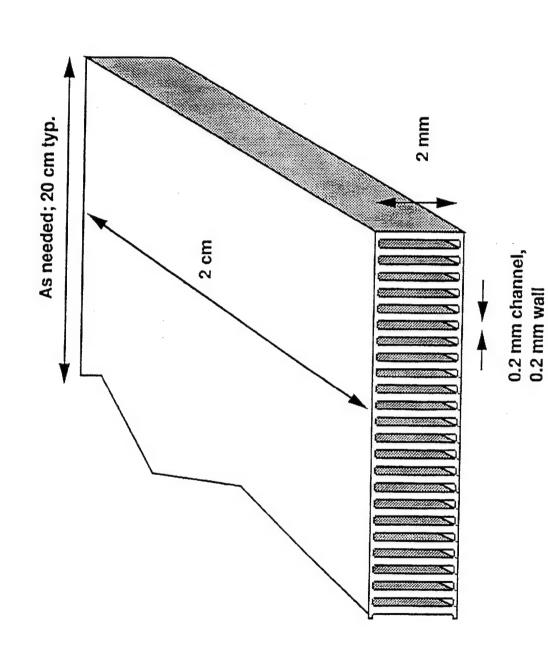






### Heat Exchanger Structure Kare's Microchannel

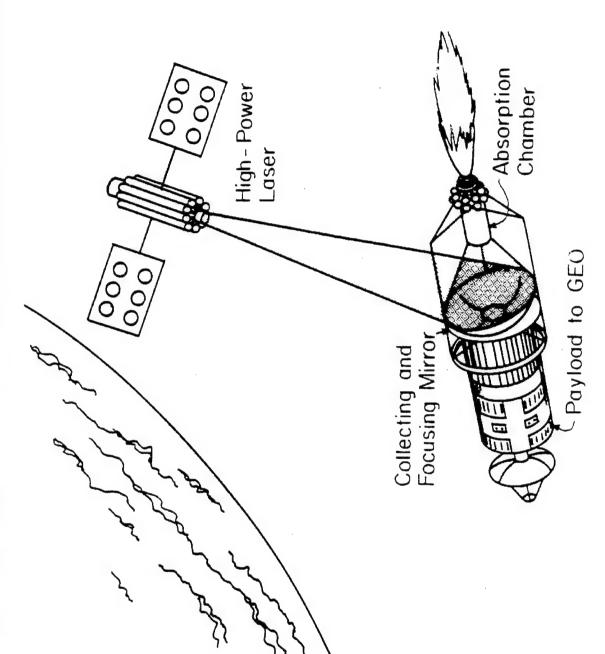






## University of Illinois Laser Propulsion Concept (Circa 1987)







## Laser Sail Propulsion



### Features

Large, lightweight structures

Very, very high power space-based laser

- Low thrust and low acceleration

- High spacecraft velocity potential (0.1 to 0.5c)

Performance Potential

- Specific Impulse: Infinite

Dependent on laser power, flux, sail area, and efficiency Thrust:

**Technology Status** 

Concepts developed

Synergistic with solar sail technology

• Russian solar mirror ZNAMIA deployed in space (1993)

On-going NASA/JPL efforts

Other university/small group/industry activities

### Issues

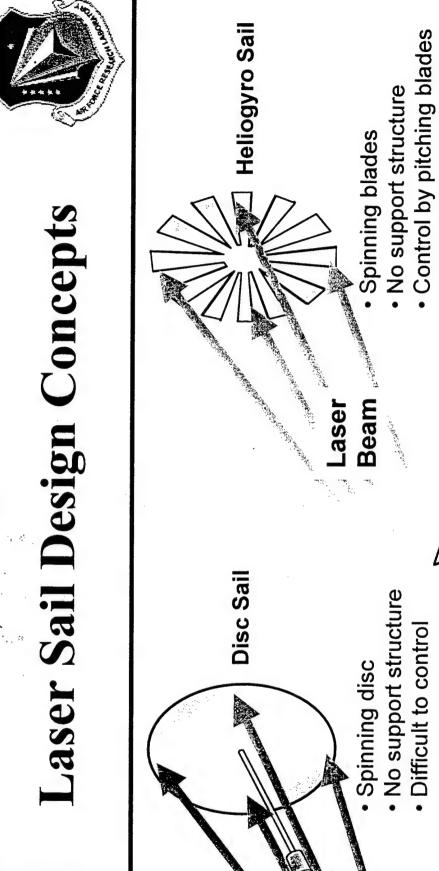
Very, very high power space-based laser

Fabrication and deployment of very large structures (lens and sail)

Verification of multi-function laser sail sections





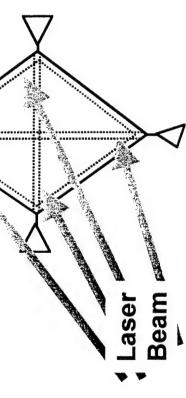


Beam Man

Laser

Rectangular Sail

- Non-rotating
- Structurally supported
- · Control solar pressure vanes





## Developments in the 90's



### NASA/MSFC

- Financially Contributed to the Air Force program during FY 97 & 98.
- Initiated their own program in FY 99
- FY 99 Study Phase
- Initiated Testing in FY 2000
- · Concepts include parabolic pulsejet, Lighteraft, & "Phipps" laser concept.

### Air Force

- Lighteraft Development Program Started FY 96
- The AFRL and NASA/MSFC have a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to work together on the Lightcraft.
- German parabolic pulsejet tests conducted in 1999.





## Laser Propulsion At MSFC

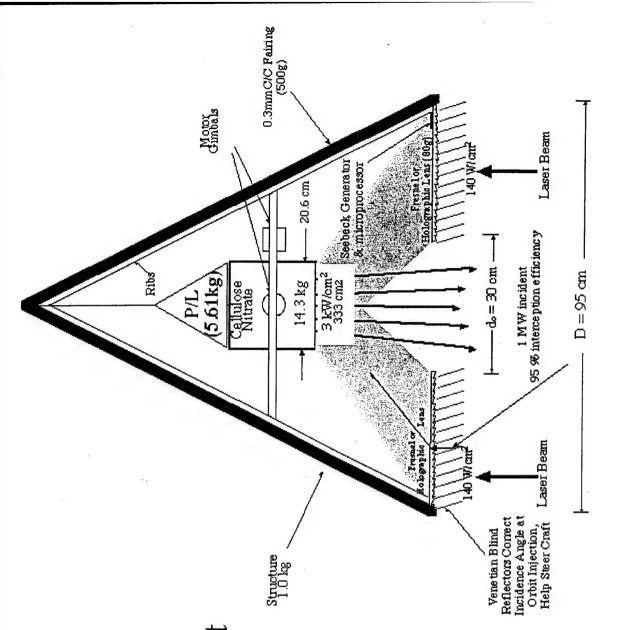
Mr. Sandy Kirkindall NASA/MSFC, TD40 Bldg. #4666 Huntsville AL 35812



## Phipps/NASA Design



- D/L=1 optimizes
  - Drag
- Center of thrust
- Jet/lens clearance
- Heat shield dumped at 120km
- "Venetian blinds"
- For orbit insertion
- For partial steering



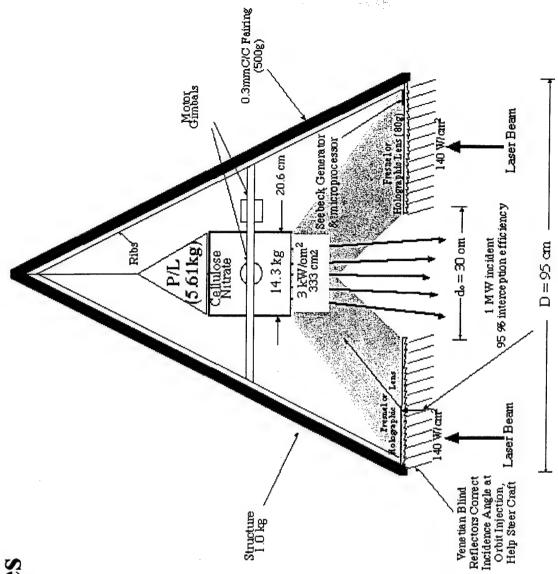


# Phipps/NASA Design (Cont)



- Fresnel lens concentrates light
- Seebeck generator provides 100W system
  - power and grade of dash ?

    Uprocessor controls actuators





# NASA CFD Studies of Lighteraft Pulse Dynamics

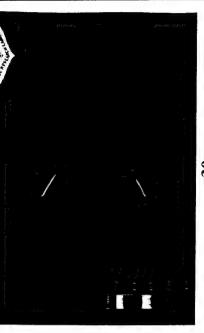




10 usec



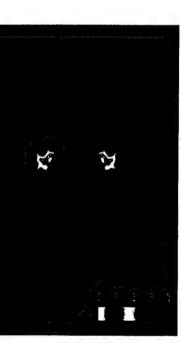
20 usec



30 usec



40 nee



60 usec



80 usec



122 usec

### PRESSURE (ATM)

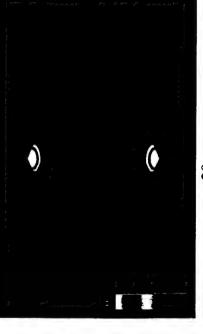


# NASA CFD Studies of Lightcraft Pulse Dynamics





10 usec



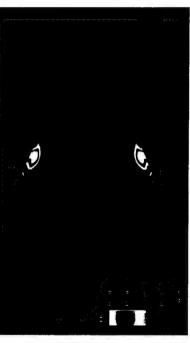
20 usec



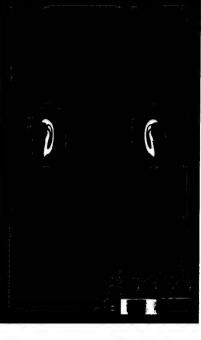
30 usec



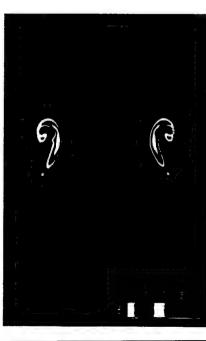
40 usec



e0 usec



80 usec



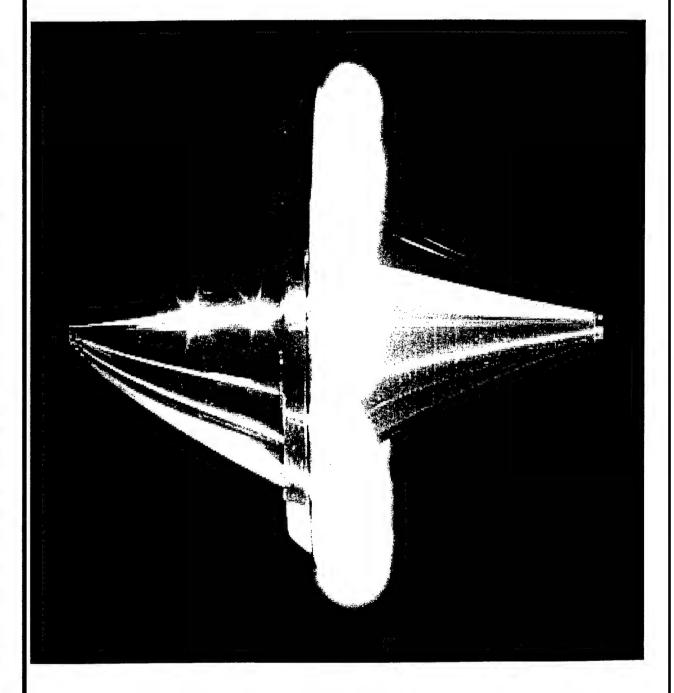
122 usec

### TEMPERATURE (K)



## DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LASER LIGHTCRAFT

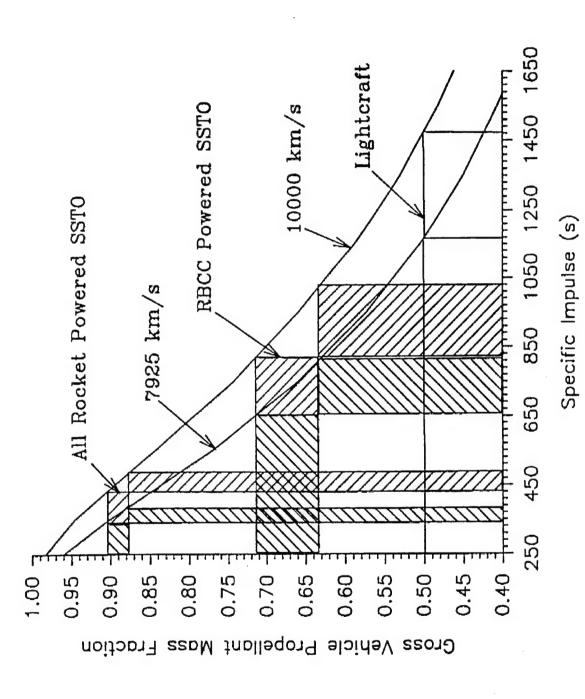






### Applied to Single-Stage-to-Orbit (SSTO) Space Transportation Concepts The "Rocket Equation"







### LOW COST ACCESS TO SPACE



### Unique Features

- Laser-Propelled Beam Rider
- Decoupled Energy Source (1 MW class infrared G/B laser)
- Single-Stage-to-Orbit (~2 kg initial weight; Mf=0.5)
- Very High Isp (Airbreathing to M=5 at 30 km; 1,000 to 3,000 s in space with H2)
- Combined-Cycle Pulsed Detonation Engine

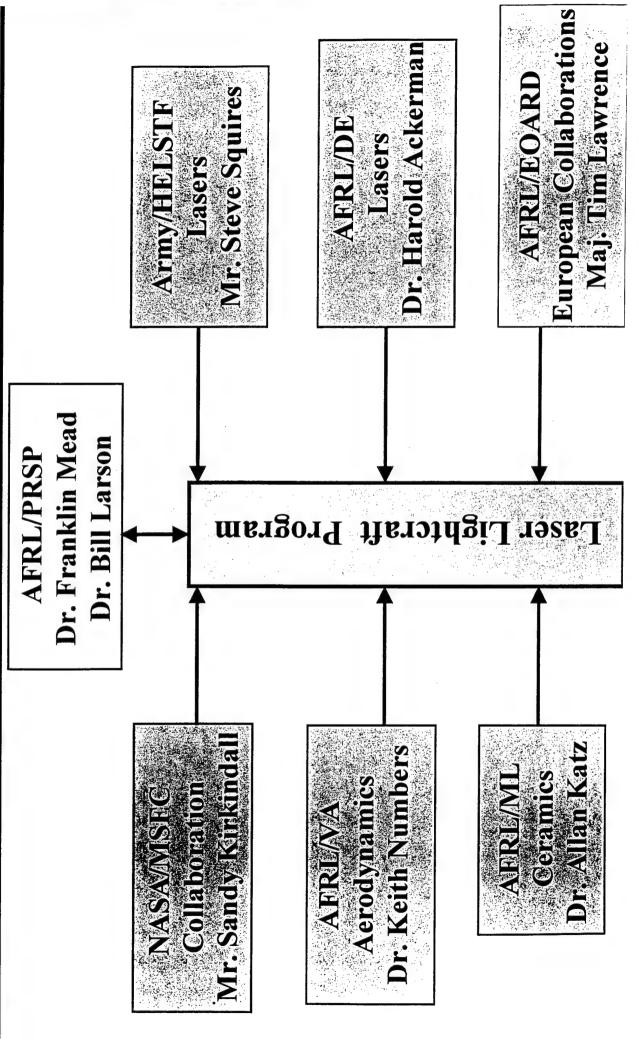


- Multiple/Shared Functional Components
- One-Meter Diameter Parabolic Telescope (Resolution=8 to 15 cm from
- Simplicity, Reliability, Safety, Environmentally Clean
- High Launch Rate (All azimuth, On-demand)
- Less Than \$500 of Electrical Power For Launch to LEO



## Program Alliances







## The Lightcraft Concept





- Forebody Aeroshell (External Compression Surface)
- Shroud (Air Inlet & Impulsive Thrust Surface)
- Afterbody (Parabolic Mirror & Plug Nozzle)
- Tankage
- Liquid Propellant (LN2, NH3 or LH2)
- Helium Pressurant
- Nanosatellite (1 kg & 1 m Dia. Focus Telescope)
- Electronics in Forebody
- Reentry Capability
- Solar Powered in Orbit



## **APPLICATIONS**



- Nanosatellite "low cost" launch on demand
- Air Force, NASA, BMDO, Communication Industry
- High Resolution Imaging, Surveillance, and Mapping (i.e., Earth Resources)
- Global Positioning and Tracking
- Threat Detection and Tracking
- Astronomical Telescope (j.e., Amateur & Professional)
- Communications and Relay (i.e., Cellular Phone)
- Tactical Laser Propulsion (i.e., Hypersonic KKV)



#### Lighteraft Development Objectives



- All Azimuth, Launch-on-demander and weed because the most a flower Air France. Broad Application Based Nano-/Microsatellites
- Air Force, NASA, BMDO, NRO, Communication Companies, Private Industry, Individuals
- Near-term (7 yrs.)
- Launch to LEO of 1 kg vehicles for less than \$500 of electrical power, and less than \$20K total coste
- Meet a variety of NASA/AF/Industry requirements for low cost access to space
- Far-term (10 to 12 yrs.)
- Launch 100 kg (220 lbs) AF/NASA vehicles to LEO for less than \$1.5M\*
- Commercial laser launch services become viable contenders, as the lowest cost provider,

\* NASA requirement for Bantam-class payloads by FY 2006.



## Pulsed Laser Vulnerability Test System (PLVTS)





800 joules/pulse

 $- 10 \text{ Hz}_{3c-5e^{-3}}?$  - (30 : sec pulses)

Modified Performance

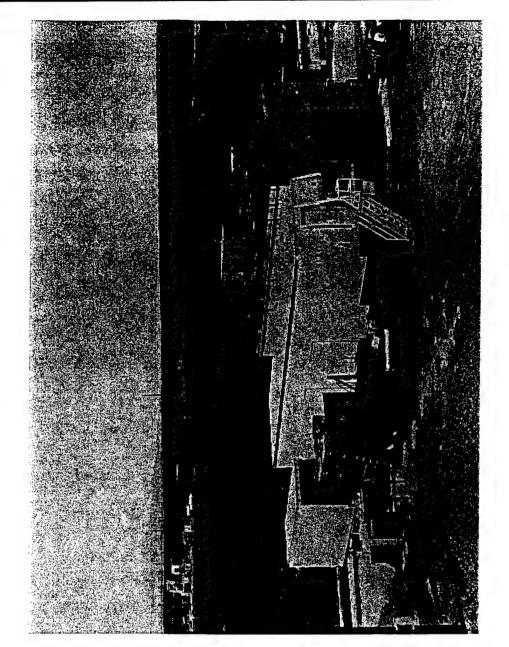
1998

400 joules/pulse

18 :sec pulses

1999

150 joules/pulse





## Phase I Accomplishments

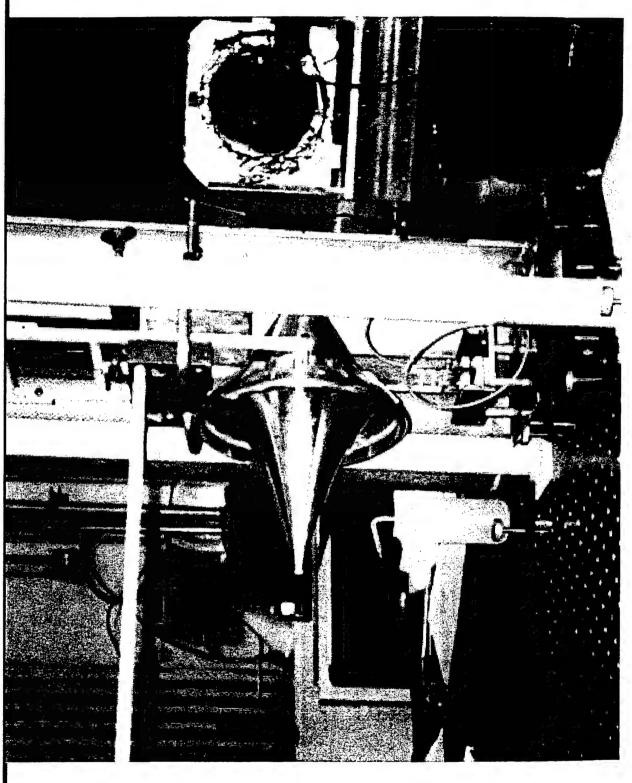


## • Phase I - Completed Dec 98

- A 3-Year Program To Demonstrate Concept Feasibility
- Lighteraft Concept Feasibility Demonstrated By:
- · Impulse, thrust, and pressure measurements accomplished.
- Shadowgraph, and beam propagation (to ~90 m) studies accomplished
- Lighteraft optics/engine vehicle geometry optimized
- Pointing & tracking system demonstrated on horizontal wireguided flights to ~122 mag
- Out door vertical free-flights to ~29 m accomplished

## Lighteraft Mounted to Ballistic Pendulum "Impulse Stand"



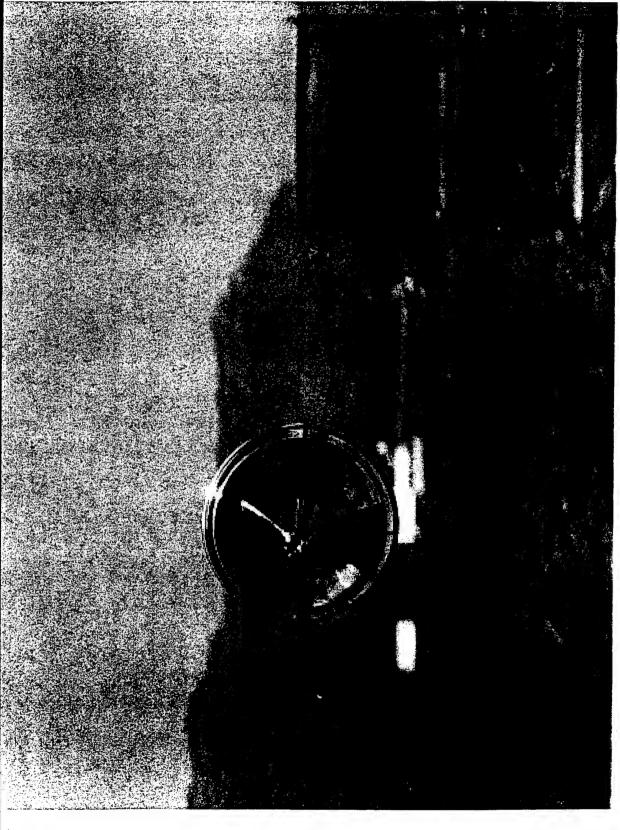






### FOUR HUNDRED FOOT OUTDOOR WIRE TEST CONFIGURATION

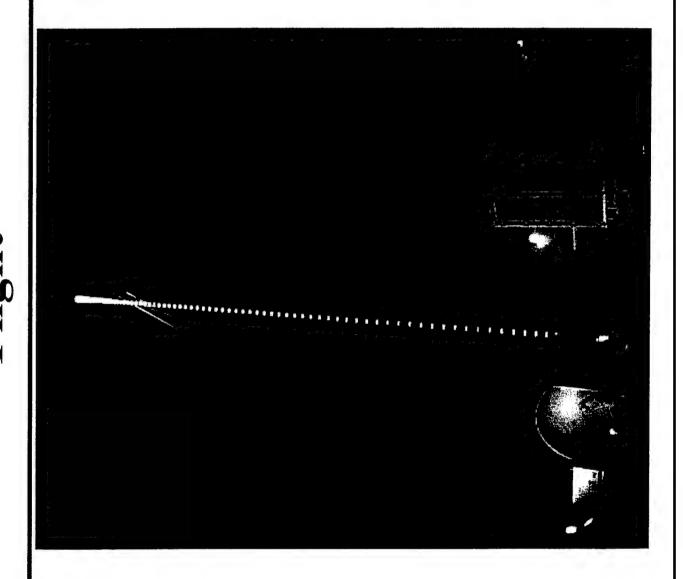






#### 29-Meter Outdoor Vertical Flight

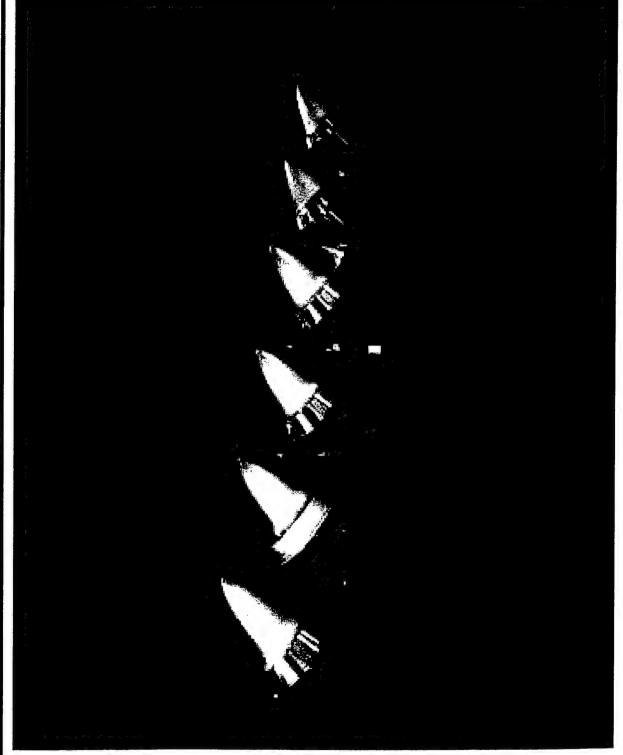






# Model #200 Lightcraft Series







## Phase II Accomplishments



## Phase II – Initiated Jan 99

A 5-Year Effort To Accomplish Vertical Launches to 30 km

With a 100 kW Laser Coco mus phrase go at the end of

Current Effort: Out Door Free Flight Tests To ~300 m.

Out door vertical free flights to ~40 m accomplished using  $_{\wedge}$ 

ablative fuel in near-field beam

Lighteraft far-field beam performance measured with pendulum using

Flaboratory and FTT telescopes to ~533 m

First, short (<1 m), vertical free flights conducted with §

FTT telescope inside 500-meter building.

Continued Developments, Studies and Analyses

Characterize Model #200-3/4th with ceramic shroud  $\omega_{\epsilon}$ 

Develop high temperature, lightweight ceramic optic with reflective

)< ⊱coatingર્

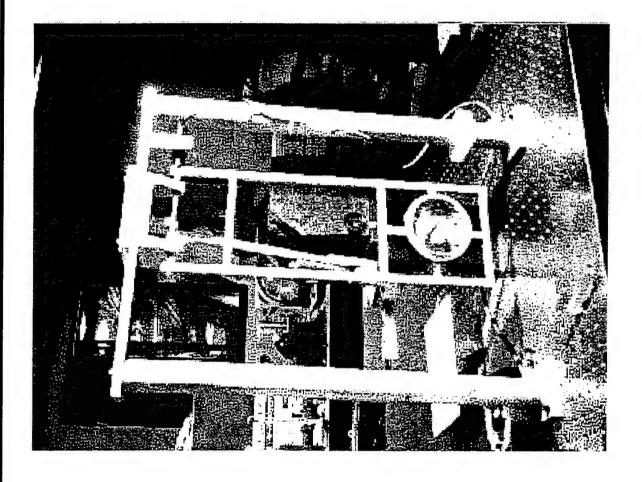
Continue flight dynamics and air inlet studies/designal

\*Obtain funding for 100 kW class CO2 electric discharge laser



# Impulse Test Stand

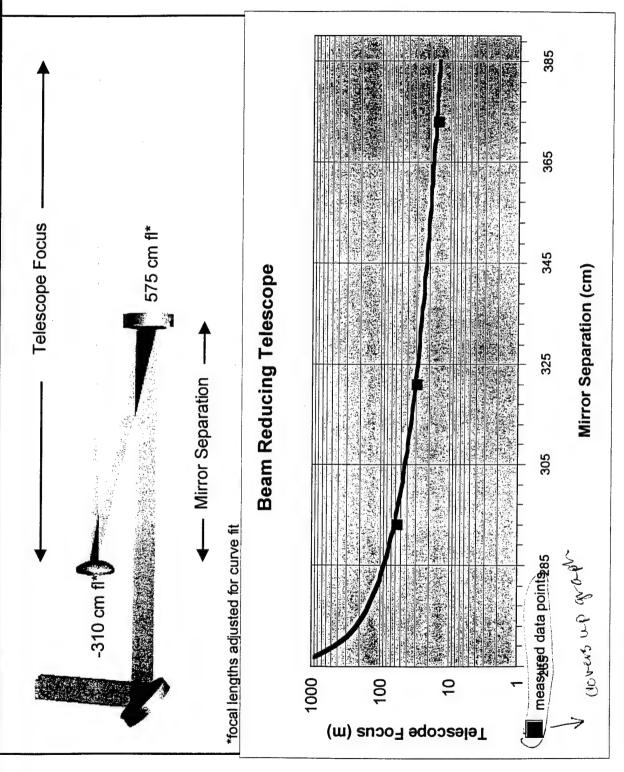






#### Used For Near Field Flights Beam Reducing Telescope



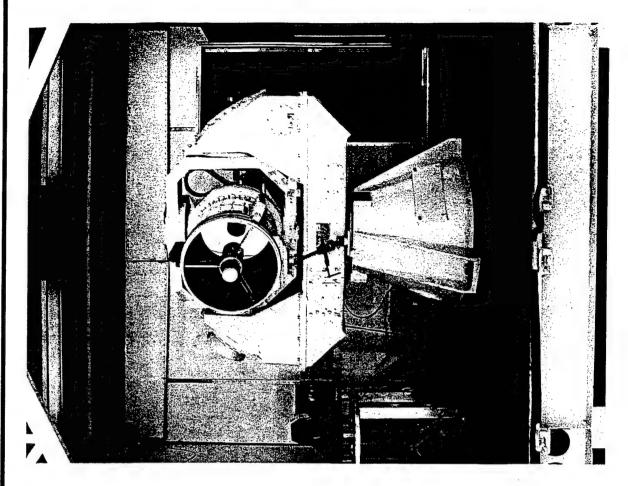




## Field Test Telescope (FTT)



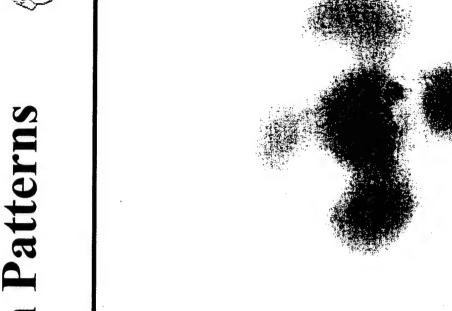
- A Laser Beam Handoff to This Telescope Should Allow Flights to Altitudes of ~300 m (1,000 ft).
- 50cm Diameter
- Cassegrainian
- Dynamic focusing





## FTT Beam Burn Patterns





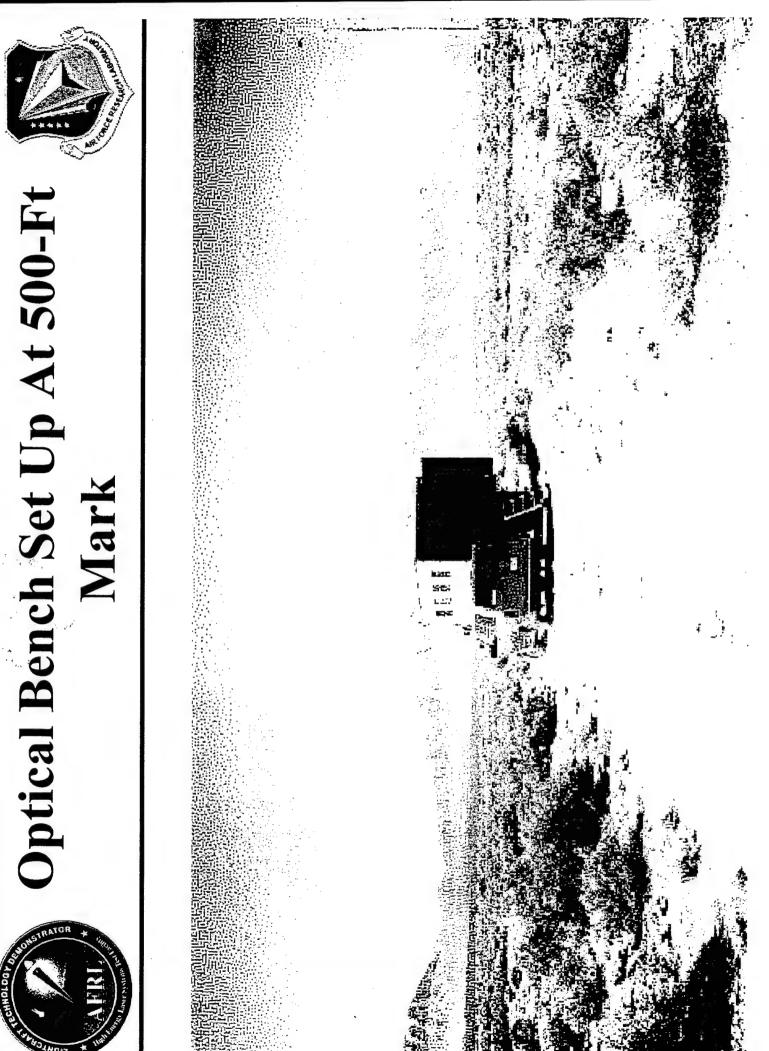
1,000 Ft

500 Ft

1,500 Ft





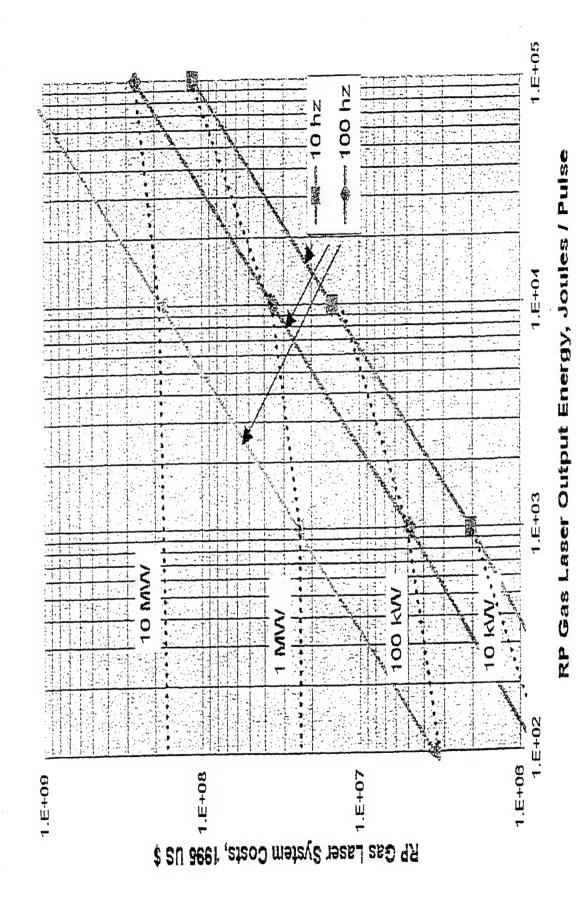




# RP GAS LASER COSTS ( $\eta = 10\%$ )



remove costra space-





#### Introduction:



# Rules of Thumb for a Laser Launch System

Payload to LEO: 1 kg/MW (within a factor of 2)

Time to orbit: 400 to 1000 seconds

Laser range required: 400 to 1500 km

Longer ranges require space-based laser or relay mirror

Electrical energy per kg to LEO:

150 - 300 kW-hr / laser efficiency

• Max. launch rate

To any orbit: 4 - 8 per hour, 100 - 200 per day  $\sim 8 - 32$  per day To one plane at 28.5°:

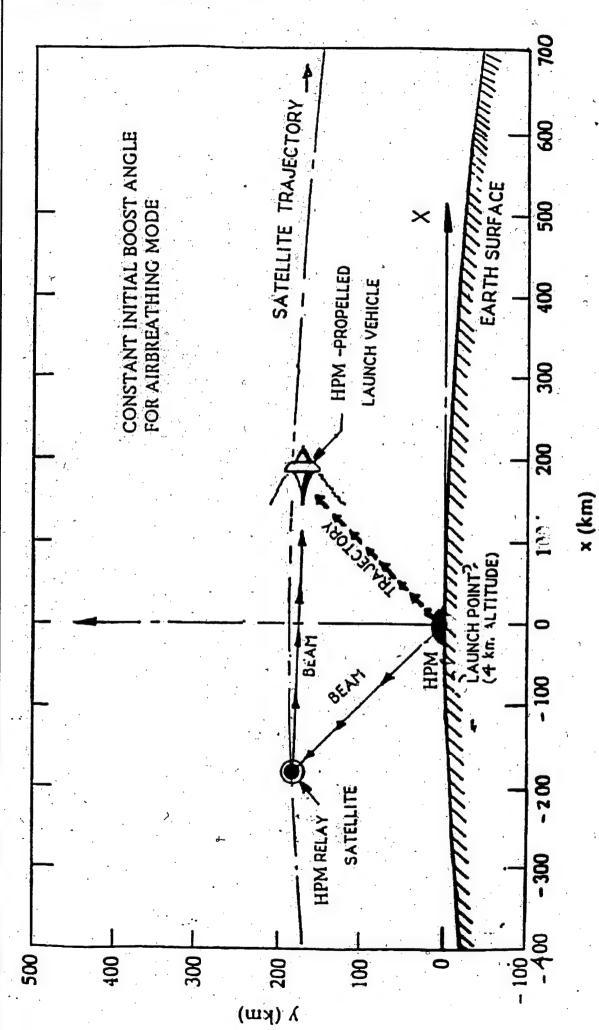
To one plane at 90°:

 $\sim 2 - 8$  per day



## Launch With Relay Satellite

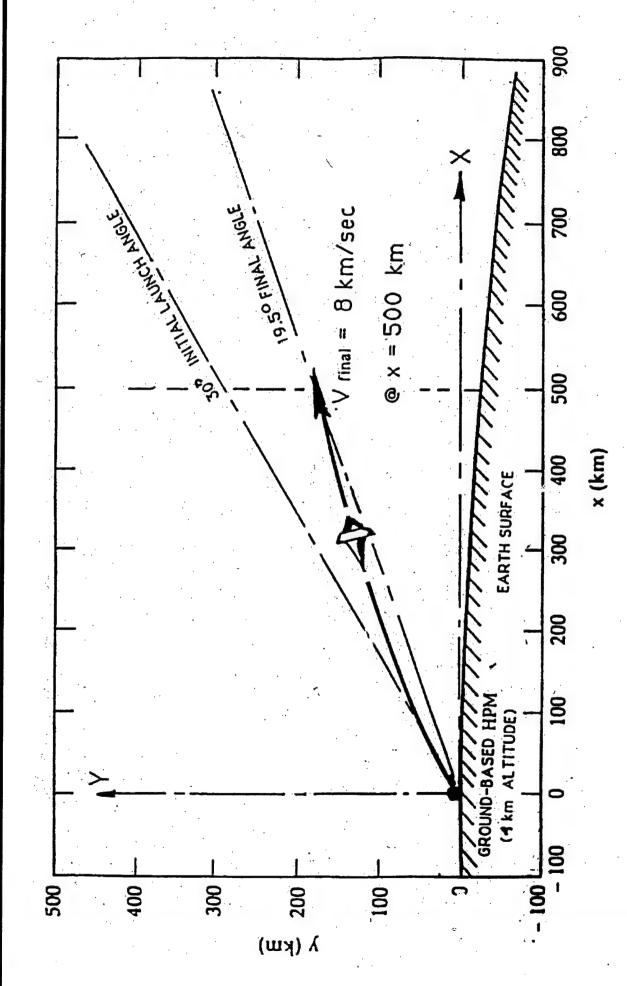






## Oirect Launch to Orbit (No Relay Satellite)









# Laser Lighteraft Performance

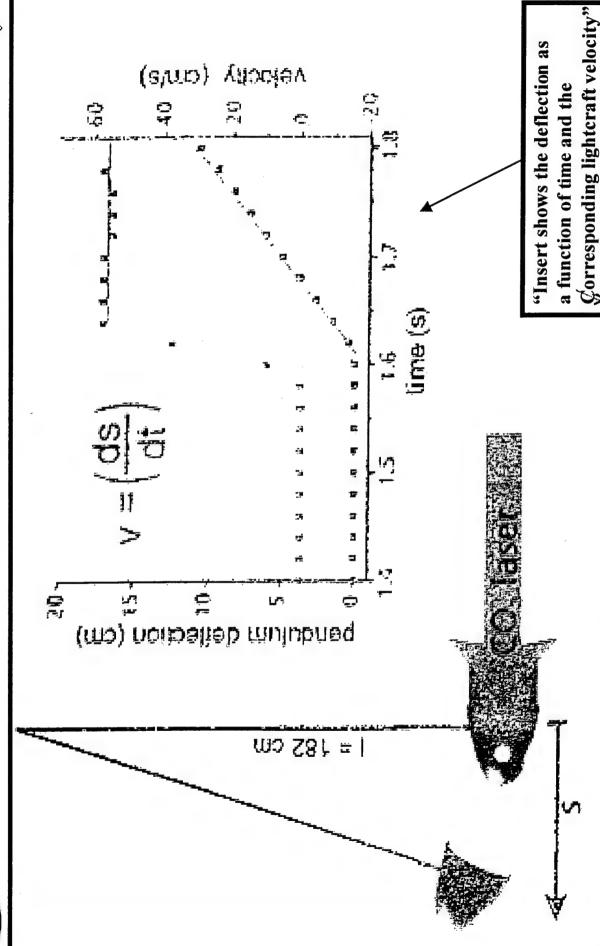
DLR Institute of Technical Physics D-70569 Stuttgart, Germany Dr. Willy L. Bohn A Paper By





#### Schematic Of Dr. Bohn's Pendulum Experiment\*





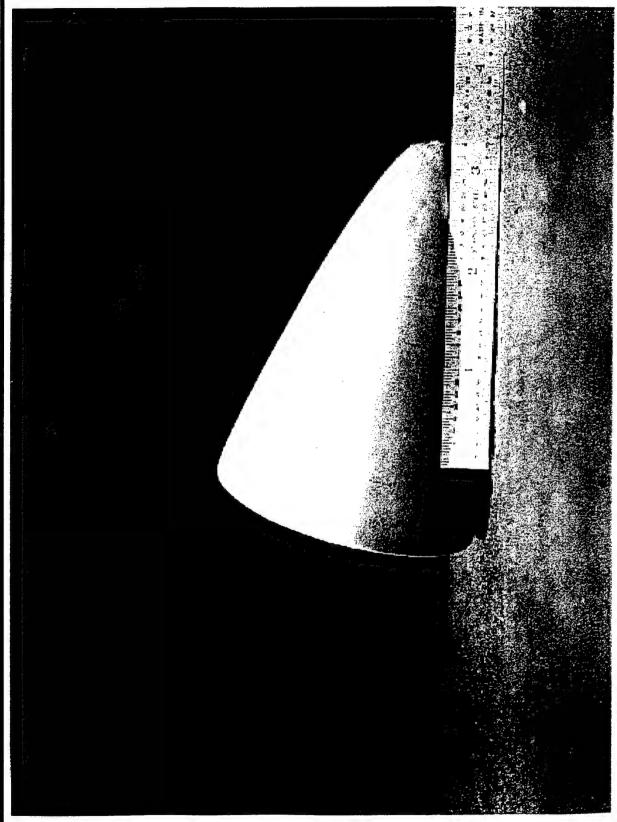
\* Taken from paper by Dr. Willy Bohn, DLR Institute of Technical Physics



# AVCO Pulsejet Test Thruster

(White Sands Missile Range, July 99)



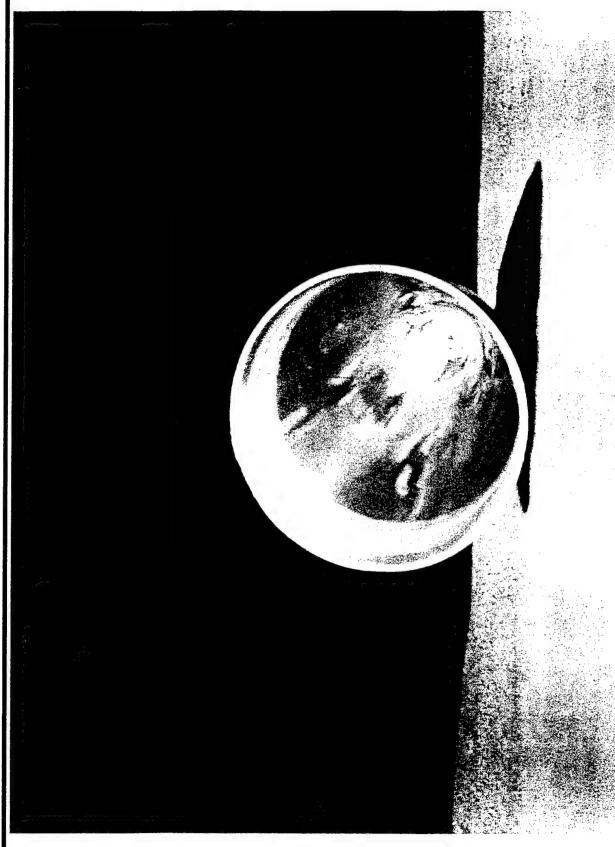




# AVCO Pulsejet Test Thruster



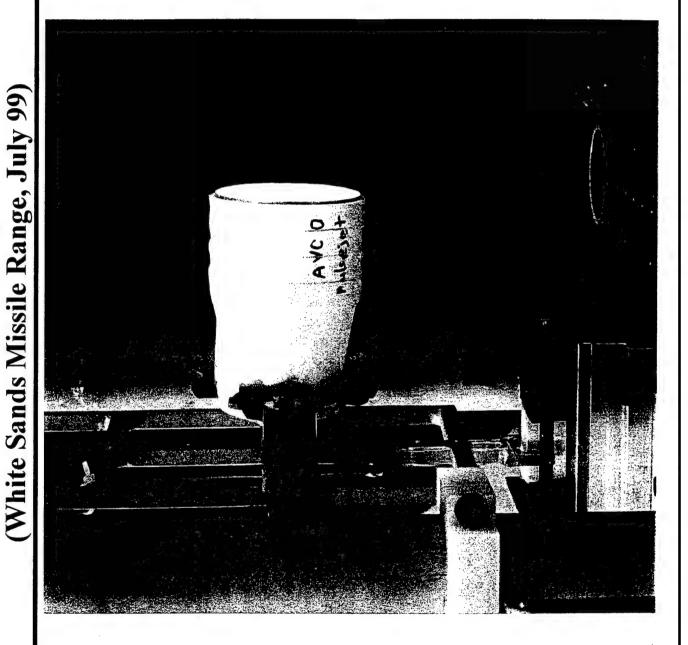
(White Sands Missile Range, July 99)





## Mounted on Pendulum Impulse Test Stand Test of AVCO Pulsejet Thruster

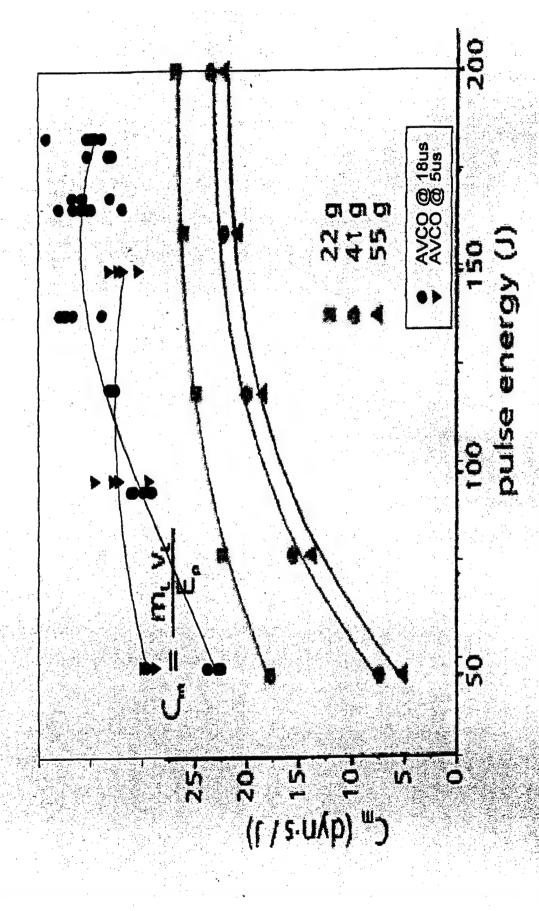






### Comparison Of Dr. Bohn's Tests With AVCO Pulsejet Data Obtained At WSMR, July 99\*

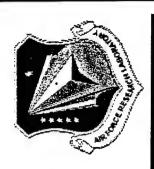


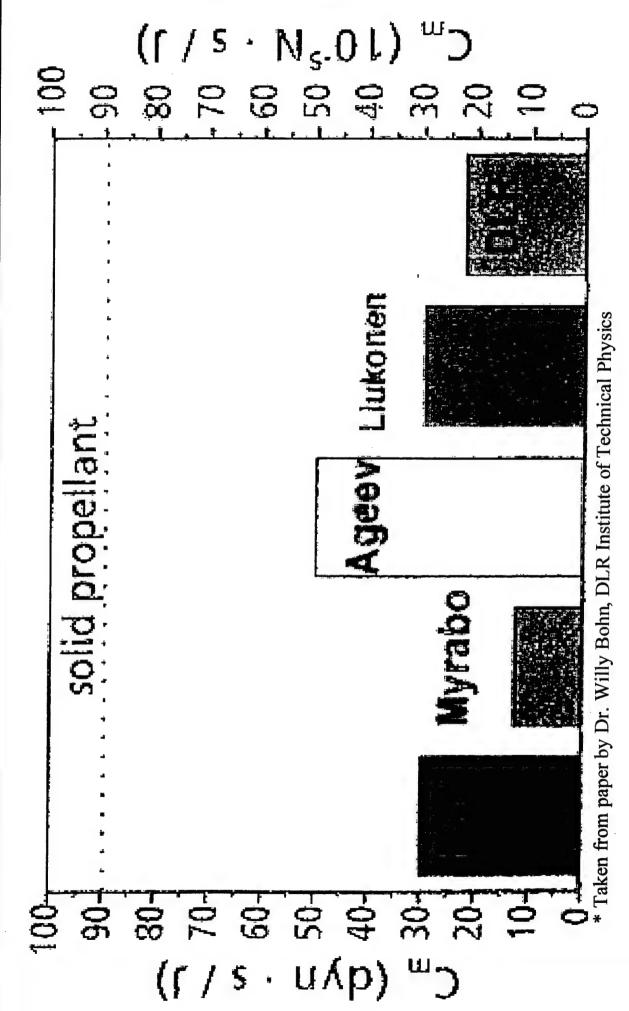


\* Taken from paper by Dr. Willy Bohn, DLR Institute of Technical Physics



## Comparison Of The Coupling Coefficient Obtained By Different Authors\*

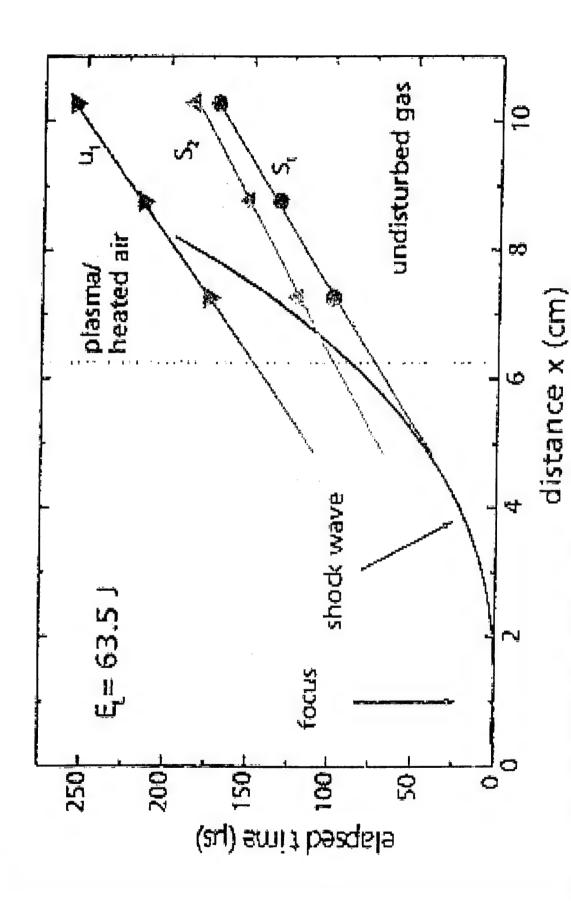






## Evolution Of Shock Waves And Plasma In The Time-Space Domain\*





<sup>\*</sup> Taken from paper by Dr. Willy Bohn, DLR Institute of Technical Physics



## Laser Propulsion Wrap-Up



- Many viable propulsion concepts possible using a laser source (mostly space propulsion)
- Laser propulsion system architecture cost dominated by laser source
- Promising near term concepts
- Laser pulsejets (Fe., Lightcraft) and laser sail

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\* italianced

\* minimize use of abbreviat

in references.

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